

There was no objection.

WELCOME HOME GI BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, at the President's second inaugural, last January, he said, "A few Americans have accepted the hardest duties in this cause, the dangerous and necessary work of fighting our enemies. We will always honor their names and their sacrifice."

The other day I introduced a bill called the Welcome Home GI Bill, to recognize the returning veterans of Iraq's and Afghanistan's theaters of war, to give them the type of compensation that they have deserved.

Now, a little history. We all know about the GI Bill. The fact is that the GI Bill was passed approximately 11 months before the end of World War II, signed by the President of the United States. Even before the war was concluded, the GIs from that war knew what the GI Bill was going to be.

And it helped them on health care and education and buying a home. It helped them put themselves on the road to their civilian life, but also put America back on the road coming home from that war.

And the truth is that every Congress, every Congress, at the end of hostilities has had a package of compensation for its veterans. Going back to the War of Independence, disabled veterans received a pension. There has not been a military engagement that the United States Congress, as the voice of the American people, has not designed a package for its returning vets; and it is high time that the 109th Congress follow the great tradition of every Congress before and begin to think what we will do for the vets returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Two weeks ago I met the Marine Corps 2nd Battalion 21st Regiment. I had seen them off 7 months earlier, and greeted them at Rosemont Horizon Arena in the Chicago suburbs, and saw those families. And one father said to me in a very poignant way, that this reception was a lot different from the reception he received about 35 years ago when he came home.

Now, what I have done in this package, which we have put together now with 15 sponsors, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Illinois Chapter has endorsed and supported, is three parts: education, health care and housing.

In the area of education, today, full benefits would be around \$36,000 in 3 years under the Montgomery GI educational benefits, and you would have to pay \$1,800 to get that \$35,000.

The Welcome Home GI Bill is 75,000 over 4 years, and you do not have to pay \$1,800 to get that educational benefit because, in the view of the legislation, your service is your contribution. You do not have to pay \$1,800 to receive

an educational benefit, whether that is for college, 4 years of education, whether it is for job training, whether it is for postgraduate work, that benefit you earned by your service.

Second, if when you come back, your place of employment does not provide health care; or if because you went off to war, when you came back your health care was canceled, you and your family will get 5 years of TRICARE health care, the gold standard and the gold-plated health care that you are provided on active duty.

Today, vets get, if obviously if they are hurt or are in poverty, they get the veterans health care system. We are going to provide them the TRICARE system that they get as if they were active duty, for them and their families.

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Third, we provide today a mortgage insurance for a home. The hardest part of getting a home is actually the down payment. It would be a \$5,000 contribution towards the down payment on their home. TRICARE health care for 5 years if your employment does not provide it or you lost it for you and your family, \$75,000 for 4 years of education to pursue job training and education and you do not have to contribute \$1,800 to get that. Your service provided that. And, lastly, \$5,000 for a down payment on a home. That is in my view the minimum of what we can do for the returning veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan is provide them that sense of compensation. It is a welcome home for the GIs. Every Congress has done it in the past.

Lastly and more importantly, today we have a disparity between the benefits between National Guard and Reserve and regular enlistees. We eliminate that disparity between Reserve and active duty because you saw the same experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. So Reserve and National Guard get the same benefits as the regular enlistees have received. It eliminates that discrimination.

As I always say, we do not owe our veterans a favor, we just have to repay one. The Welcome Home GI Bill has now received the support of the Illinois chapter of the VFW. I look forward to the support of others. We will be submitting the bill next week.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING MATTHEW DRAKE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this week Matthew Drake, a soldier who had been serving our Nation in Iraq, was awarded the Purple Heart for grave injuries he sustained on October 15, 2004, in Anwar Province, Iraq. May I please extend to him and to his family warmest congratulations and deepest gratitude on behalf of the people of the United States.

Private First Class Drake, a resident of Toledo, Ohio, and graduate ofsylvania North High School, while driving a 6-ton truck became the only survivor of a bombing. Comatose, he had a fractured skull, severe head injuries, multiple back injuries, many broken bones, and damage to his right arm and shoulder. He underwent many surgeries while hospitalized in Germany at both military as well as German private hospitals and more after traveling to Walter Reed Army Hospital here in Washington where he remained in a coma for many weeks.

Matthew Drake survived by all accounts miraculously and will undergo rehabilitation for a very long time. He has been courageous in his journey. He said this week that on receiving this Purple Heart he wanted to be able to stand from his wheelchair in order to have it pinned on him.

Throughout the months since Matt was wounded, his family has struggled to afford what is necessary to help him to travel to the hospitals on our coasts where people have been trying to help him. For his family to be near him and to help his very long rehabilitation, a fund was established at Sky Bank in Toledo, Ohio, on his behalf.

Last week, I attended a spaghetti dinner which was a fundraiser arranged by Matt's family and friends to raise the money, at least part of it, required for this son of our Nation to continue his progress with the support of his family. And before I left, they gave me this T-shirt to remember Matt. And it says on it, "The Long Road Home, Matthew Drake, Army Special Forces Injured in Iraq. He was there for us. October 15, 2004."

Matthew Drake was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1983. He was raised in Sylvania and attended Maplewood Elementary School. He played soccer and was a Boy Scout and a member of Olivet Lutheran Church. While a student at Northview High School, Matthew was a wrestler and excelled in gymnastics. He trained in the martial arts, played guitar, and was an honor roll student.

After graduation, he started college at Bowling Green University and worked for the United Parcel Service, but 1 year later he felt duty-bound to serve our country. He left college and enlisted in the United States Army on October 13, 2002. Following training, he was assigned to Special Forces Bravo Company and sent to Iraq on September 7 just having turned 21. Not 6 weeks later he was promoted to specialist and 2 days after that the attack that changed his life forever occurred.

Now facing the greatest challenge of his young life, to return from a near